

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, GB

SUBJ: SANTA CLARA ORE PORT

REF: (A) LIBREVILLE 383; (B) LIBREVILLE 385; (C) STATE
269677, DEC. 9, 1974

1. SOROS VERY GRATIFIED BONG'S REPORTED INTEREST GIVING THEM GREEN LIGHT (REF. A) IN VIEW FIRM'S LONG, DILIGENT EFFORTS OVER SEVERAL YEARS PROVIDE PROPOSAL MEETING GABONESE NEEDS AND DESIRES. SOROS WILLING EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES COOPERATING SETIMEG. SOROS THINKS VERY HIGHLY OF DRAVO (ESPECIALLY OF DRAVO EQUIPMENT) AND WOULD BE PLEASED WORK WITH LATTER ON SANTA CLARA, AS IT HAS DONE ON OTHER PROJECTS. HOWEVER, ETHICS OF SOROS DESIGN ENGINEER STATUS PRECLUDE RECOMMENDING SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL FIRM UNLESS ASKED TO DO SO BY CLIENT.

2. DRAVO DEFINITELY INTERESTED IN CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPMENT PHASES. WOULD BE DELIGHTED WORK WITH SOROS.

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HOWEVER, THERE IS QUESTION OF PREMATURELY SEEKING BUSINESS

-- I.E., BEFORE DESIGN CONTRACT SIGNED. DRAVO FEELS NEGOTIATIONS WITH GABONESE AT THIS TIME MIGHT PUT CART (CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPMENT) BEFORE HORSE (PLANNING AND DESIGN). MOREOVER, IF ONE OF EUROPEAN COMPETITORS FOR THIS PROJECT GETS THE DESIGN, PROSPECTS FOR DRAVO AND OTHER U.S. CONSTRUCTORS AND SUPPLIERS WOULD NOT BE BRIGHT.

3. IN LIGHT PARAS 1 AND 2, ABOVE, AND NEW MONIFESTATION BONGO INTEREST IN GIVING BUSINESS U.S. FIRMS, EMBASSY SHOULD TAKE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY PRESS GOG SIGN SOROS/ BCEOM PROPOSAL WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY, STRESSING SOROS' SUPERIOR SKILLS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS STEMMING FROM SPEC- IALIZATION MINERAL PORT DESIGN, SOROS' YEARS OF EFFORT FOR SANTA CLARA CONTRACT; URGENCY OF ACTION TO ENSURE PORT WILL BE READY TO HANDLE MANGANESE ORE WHEN TRANSGABON RAILROAD BEGINS OPERATION; AND IMPORTANCE OF PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST (I.E., DESIGN THE PORT, THEN SEEK CONSTRUCTORS TO BUILD TO GABONESE SPECS DRAWN UP BY DESIGNER). SOROS BROCHURE SENT EMBASSY LAST DECEMBER SHOULD BE HELPFUL RE THIS APPROACH.

4. FYI: WE ARE CONCERNED THAT DELAY WILL ONLY WORK AGAINST U.S. PARTICIPATION, INDUCING GABONESE TO SEEK MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PROSPECTIVE BIDDERS TO PLAY OFF AMONG EACH OTHER (AS IN TRANSGABON RAILROAD) TO DETRIMENT GABONESE AS WELL AS U.S. INTERESTS. BOTH BETHLEHEM AND U.S. STEEL SUPPORT SOROS/BCEOM PROPOSAL. END FYI.

5. COMMERCE CONTACT KAISER AND CHARLES T. MAIN SOLELY IN CONTEXT GRAND POUBARA DAM. HOWEVER, KAISER HAS QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE DESIGN, BUILD ORE PORTS ALTHOUGH NOT AS SPECIALIZED OR EXPERIENCED IN PORT DESIGN AS SOROS. CHARLES T. MAIN APPEARS TO HAVE RATHER LIMITED EXPERIENCE THIS FIELD, BUT IS TOP-DRAWER IN OTHERS. IF EITHER FIRM SHOULD EVINCE INTEREST SANTA CLARA PORT DESIGN, EMBASSY SHOULD, OF COURSE, PROVIDE ALL APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE.

6. AS SOON AS GOG INKS CONTRACT WITH U.S. FIRM FOR PORT DESIGN, COMMERCE WILL NOTIFY DRAVO AND OTHER U.S. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONSTRUCTORS AND SUPPLIERS.
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